

Feasibility of a Stack Integrated SOFC Optical Chemical Sensor

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Objectives

We propose to further investigate the feasibility of an innovative chemical sensor based on monitoring the surface plasmon resonance (SPR) bands of metal and bimetallic nanoparticle doped Y_2O_3 stabilized ZrO_2 (YSZ nano-cermet), as a function of fuel concentrations, impurities (CO and H_2S) and temperature (500-900°C). Since the SPRs of nano-cermet are directly correlated to the composition and shape of the metal particles,¹ along with the composition of the surrounding matrix², the nano-cermet will be tested and designed to provide real time sensory outputs for the chemicals of interest. The proposed sensor has a YSZ matrix, which is commonly used as both an electrolyte and, when doped with nickel, as an anode in SOFC^{3,4}, thus upon feasibility demonstration, integration directly into the SOFC will be possible. The development of an integrated SOFC chemical sensor will provide the following benefits: 1) In situ monitoring of the fuel cell chemical composition, linked to a feedback loop, will allow smart control of the SOFC, 2) Monitoring the chemical composition of a low temperature SOFC in real time will enable a more complete understanding of the catalytic and reaction mechanisms and thus lead to more efficient stack designs, 3) The development of sensors for operation within a simulated SOFC environment will at the same time be satisfying the need for chemical sensors for the Department of Energy Vision 21 Initiative.

Accomplishments to Date

Nanocomposite films deposited using dual target confocal physical vapor deposition have been deposited and analyzed using x-ray diffraction, Auger spectroscopy and scanning electron microscopy. We used Uv-Vis absorption spectroscopy to evaluate the surface plasmon resonance bands of embedded Au nanoparticles in a YSZ matrix for the detection of CO at operating temperatures up to 800°C. Promising results have been obtained, however extensive experiments as a function of temperature and CO concentration are required to determine the sensing properties of these materials. Pd/PdO-YSZ based nanocomposites are also under development for the detection of hydrogen at 650°C. Preliminary results on the thermal stability and sensitivity of the Pd/PdO-YSZ nanocomposites have shown a sensitivity towards percent level hydrogen concentrations with reliable results obtained over 100 exposure cycles. We are currently upgrading our optical detection apparatus to include a CCD coupled monochromator which will allow measurements to be obtained with 5 second time resolution.

Future Work

Perform extensive experiments on both the Au-YSZ and Pd/PdO-YSZ nanocomposite systems as a function of target gas concentration and temperature, such that the dynamics of the sensing mechanism will be determined and the corresponding kinetics of the sensing reactions will be analyzed. Further development and optimization of the materials set will be pursued to obtain a sensitive and reliable sensing material for harsh environment applications.

Publications

George Sirinakis, Rezina Siddique, Michael A. Carpenter, and Alain E. Kaloyeros, "Microstructure and optical properties of Y₂O₃-stabilized ZrO₂-Au nanocomposite films", Accepted, Journal of Materials Research, 2005

Patent Applications

N/A

Conference Proceedings

Sirinakis, George, Siddique, Rezina, Zhao, Zhouying, Carpenter, Michael A., "All-Optical Chemical Gas Sensors for Harsh Environments Based on Au-YSZ Nanocomposite Films", Materials Research Society (Spring 2005)

Sirinakis, George, Sun, Lianchao, Siddique, Rezina, Efstathiadis, Carpenter, Michael, A., Kaloyeros, Alain E., "Synthesis and Spectroellipsometric Characterization of Y₂O₃-stabilized ZrO₂-Au Nanocomposite Films for Smart Sensor Applications", Materials Research Society (Fall 2004)

Awards Received as a Result of Supported Research

N/A

Students Supported

George Sirinakis, Ph.D.

Rezina Siddique, M.S.

¹ R. Jin, Y. Cao, C. Mirkin, K. L. Kelly, G. C. Schatz, J. G. Zheng, "Photoinduced conversion of silver nanospheres to nanoprisms", *Science*, **294**, 1901 (2001).

² Y. Saito, Y. Imamura, A. Kitahara, "Absorption in the visible region of YSZ implanted with Ag ions", *Coll. Surf. B*, **19**, 275 (2000).

³ S. C. Singhal, "Advances in solid oxide fuel cell technology", *Solid State Ionics*, **135**, 305 (2000).

⁴ O. Yamamoto, "Solid oxide fuel cells: Fundamental aspects and prospects", *Elect. Act.*, **45**, 2423 (2000).